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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAMASCUS 000698

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/FO AND NEA/ELA
NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/MCDERMOTT
PARIS FOR WALLER
LONDON FOR TSOU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#) [KPAO](#)
SUBJECT: SYRIAN AL-RA,Y TV SHOWCASING COALITION AND IRAQI
FORCE DEATHS/INJURIES

Classified By: CDA Maura Connelly for reasons 1.5 b and d.

11. (C) Summary: Former Al-Ra'y TV correspondent Ibrahim Al-Jabeen (protect) told us on September 28 that Syria-based Al-Ra,y TV had assumed the Iraq-based Al-Zawraa TV,s former role of showcasing Iraqi militant attacks on Coalition and Iraqi forces. Although Mish,an Al-Jaburi,s wife, Al-Usta, owns the channel, according to Al-Jabeen she has no role in its day-to-day operations as Al-Jaburi makes all editorial decisions. PAS confirmed the content of the programming, which included graphic videos of attacks against Coalition and Iraqi forces as well as editorial commentary disparaging Arab leaders, save for President Asad. End Summary.

Al-Ra,y TV: The Owner, Programs, and Viewership

12. (C) PAS staff met with former Al-Ra'y TV correspondent Ibrahim Al-Jabeen (protect) on September 28 following the September 16 designation of Al-Ra,y TV and its owner, Raw,a Al-Usta, under E.O. 12438. Former Al-Ra'y TV correspondent Ibrahim Al-Jabeen (protect) told us that Syria-based Al-Ra,y TV had assumed the Iraq-based Al-Zawraa TV,s former role of showcasing Iraqi militant attacks on Coalition and Iraqi forces. Al-Jabeen stated that Raw,a Al-Usta, the station's legal owner, plays no editorial role and that her husband Mish,an Al-Jaburi -- the former owner of the now-defunct Iraqi satellite channel Al-Zawraa TV -- makes all the editorial decisions. (Note: Al-Usta is a Syrian citizen. Al-Jaburi is not. The Syrian Publications Law of 2001 limits ownership of media outlets to Syrian citizens. Al-Jaburi and his previous TV channel, Al-Zawraa TV, have already been designated under E.O. 13438. End Note.)

13. (SBU) Principally, Al-Ra,y TV broadcasts video clips of attacks on Coalition and Iraqi soldiers by unidentified militants. These morbid and bloody scenes are often accompanied by dramatic music and prayers in what appears to be an attempt to glorify what the station dubbed, "the Iraqi resistance." Additionally, the station in its editorial capacity seeks to discredit Arab leaders, except Syrian President Bashar Asad. Editorial commentary accuses Arab leaders of treason and claims they are U.S. and Israeli "agents." The station features interviews with unnamed people, often Westerners, who disparage the United States and its role in the reconstruction of Iraq.

14. (C) Post monitored the channel over recent weeks as both Arabsat and Nilesat broadcast its signal. During one program, a Syrian caller who claimed to have fought in Iraq praised the bravery and "sacrifices of other Syrians who have

fought in Iraq." Calls broadcast on-air originated from Iraq and Syria and from as far away as Egypt and Morocco.

The Man Behind Al-Ra,y TV

15. (C) Al-Jabeen noted Al-Jaburi was a close ally to Uday Hussein before the 2003 war, and claimed that Jaburi had acquired his fortune from his involvement with the UN Oil-for-Food Program. Jaburi apparently used this wealth to fund Al-Ra,y TV and a separate Damascus-based newspaper, "Al-Ittijah Al-Akher," which he claimed is the "mouthpiece for the Iraqi resistance." The former correspondent described Al-Jubari as "tough and ruthless," dealing with his employees in a "brutish manner." This treatment led Al-Jabeen and the TV manager, Dr. Yahya Al-Aridi, to resign. According to Al-Jabeen, others have left the station for similar reasons, including Al-Jaburi's own son. Al-Jabeen hinted at rumors Al-Jaburi may have even shot at one of his reporters. (Note: Al-Jaburi was an Iraqi National Council member and a former Governor of Mosul; however, corruption accusations marred his political career causing him to flee to Syria. End Note.)

16. (C) Comment: Al-Ra,y may be targeting audiences in Iraq, but its presence on major satellite providers broadens the platform for its clearly anti-American messages. Due to strained U.S.-Syrian bilateral relations and Al-Jaburi's carefully choreographed praise of President Asad, the SARG is unlikely to take action against the station. Noting its increasingly negative tone toward other Arab governments,

DAMASCUS 00000698 002 OF 002

Post believes now may be the time to call on pan-Arab satellite providers like Arabsat and Nilesat to discontinue broadcasting Al-Ra,y TV. End Comment.
CONNELLY